

# *The Lions Eye*

A Publication of the  
Lions Eye Foundation of California-Nevada, Inc.



Winter 2016-2017

## *How Surgery Changed a Young Man's Life*

Eugene "BJ" Kriewitz came to the Lions Eye Clinic, not to improve his vision, but to correct his strabismus which is commonly called "crossed eyes." Strabismus is a condition in which the eyes are not properly aligned with each other. It typically involves a lack of coordination between the extraocular muscles, which prevents bringing the gaze of each eye to the same point in space.

While some may think of strabismus as just cosmetic, correcting this condition and his appearance were a priority for BJ and our doctors. BJ was born with alternating esotropia which is a form of strabismus, in which one or both eyes turn inward. The condition can be constantly present, or occur intermittently, and can give the individual a "crossed eyed" appearance. While both his eyes see well individually, he was not able to use his eyes together to achieve depth perception.

On top of that, as a young child he had trouble breathing which caused him to be in and out of hospital emergency rooms for the first three years of his life. His mother passed away early in his life, and due to financial restraints, BJ never had a chance to have the operation on his eyes. "I tried," stated BJ's father Butch, "but with no insurance and the quoted price of \$30,000 surgery was not possible."

Looking different than the other kids is very difficult, and having that difference confirmed by looking in a mirror is especially hard on one's self esteem. But BJ did pretty well and graduated from high school despite the ridicule and bullying he had to endure.

While visiting his dad and grandparents, BJ was introduced to Lion Al Neblett, a past district governor from District 4-C2. PDG Al was very familiar with the Foundation and is a LEF life member along with his wife Betty. Lion Al asked the Vallejo Executive Lions Club to sponsor this young man and thus offer him the opportunity to travel to San Francisco and be seen at the Lions Eye Clinic. BJ, his father Butch



BJ before surgery



BJ after surgery

*Mission Statement: "The Lions Eye Foundation preserves and restores the gift of sight by providing free ophthalmic examinations, operations and medications to the less fortunate members of our community."*

## *How Surgery Changed a Young Man's Life (cont.)*

and Lion Al and his wife Betty traveled to California Pacific Medical Center for BJ's first appointment. After a number of appointments to confirm the measurements for his eye muscle surgery, BJ was given a surgical date.

BJ's strabismus surgery was performed by Dr. Jill Rotruck, chief resident at California Pacific Medical Center, and by her pediatric surgical attending physician, Dr. Alan Scott. Surgery involved the repositioning of the muscles in both eyes allowing BJ to have both eyes looking straight ahead at the same time. The day after the operation, BJ returned to the clinic to have his eye patch removed and his eyes checked. Curious about the result, BJ immediately picked up his cell phone and took a selfie. He was staring at the image on his cell phone and we all asked him how he felt. He said, with tears in his eyes, that he had never seen his eyes straight and both staring back at him.

Betty was so excited to see BJ's beautiful blue eyes and the smile on his face that she could not hold back her tears. Everyone said, "What a miracle." With this surgery, we were able to treat something even more important than how the world perceived BJ, we were able to change how BJ saw himself.

The before and after surgery pictures show the marked difference in BJ's eyes. The after photograph also shows the new self-confidence that BJ now has.

BJ's father stated, "I am so thankful to the doctors for donating their time and expertise to help my son. The services at the Lions Eye Foundation were spectacular though out our many visits and phone calls. I am also grateful for the Vallejo Executive Lions Club for sponsoring my son."

BJ is back at work and cannot wait to see his extended family and friends. BJ agreed with his father and added, "I wish to thank everyone involved in my care and surgery. This has been a wonderful gift. I am sure my life from here on out will be a lot better through employment and my ability to see normally."

## *CPMC Chief Resident Dr. Michael Hemond*

Michael Hemond, MD, PhD was born and raised in the Boston area. He earned an undergraduate degree in Physics from Harvard University, and a PhD in Biophysics from Harvard University and the Harvard/MIT Program in Health Sciences and Technology.

Michael received his MD from Tufts University in Boston. Prior to moving to San Francisco, he completed his intern year in internal medicine at Mount Auburn Hospital in Cambridge, MA.

Michael was drawn to the CPMC Ophthalmology program because of the depth of its clinical and surgical experience as well as the knowledgeable faculty. In his free time he enjoys biking, running, sailing, hiking, and jazz.



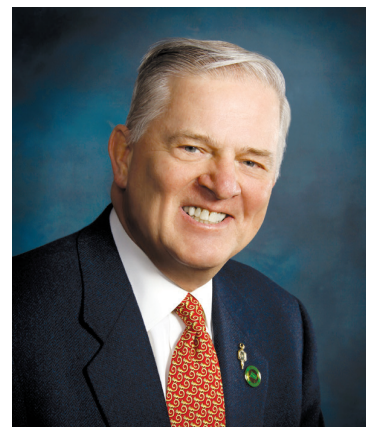
**Dr. Michael Hemond**

## *Meet Dennis Meermans, Officer and Advisor*

Advisor Dennis Meermans became a Lion in the spring of 2014, three months after retiring and relocating to Santa Rosa with his wife Kathryn. After managing an exclusive private country club in Greenwich, Connecticut for over 38 years, Dennis wanted to join a service-minded organization whose mission was to assist the less-fortunate in the Santa Rosa community. He has served as Secretary of the Santa Rosa Host Lions Club and is currently the 2<sup>nd</sup> Vice President of that club. In 2016, Dennis was elected to the Lions Eye Foundation as an Advisor.

Born and raised in a suburb of Cleveland, Ohio, Dennis joined the U.S. Army in 1966 and served as a communications/cryptology specialist in several locations in Thailand from 1966 to 1970. After his discharge from the Army, he attended and graduated from the Cuyahoga Community College in Cleveland and was then accepted into the School of Hotel Administration at Cornell University in Ithaca, New York. After graduating from Cornell, he worked his way further east and began his private club management career in 1975. In 1980, on sabbatical from his country club duties, Dennis had the opportunity to be one of the managers for the Olympic Village at the Lake Placid Winter Olympics.

Dennis and Kathryn have traveled the world and enjoy visiting restaurants and wineries on their journeys. Dennis is looking forward to getting better acquainted with all the Trustees and Advisors of the Lions Eye Foundation and to performing his new duties as the organization's Secretary.



Advisor Dennis Meermans  
LEF Secretary

## *Acknowledgements and Thanks*

*October - December 2016*

**Memorial Donations (at least \$200):** • Charleen Gavette • Gough-Araujo-Lorman-Setchell-Gouvaia Families • Sally Territo Wong • Petaluma 7-11 Lions Club • M. E. Smithberger

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*For the quarter ending 12/31/2016, LEF spent \$128,460 for Patient Services that had a value of \$1,197,000. Please remember when you are thinking of making a donation to the LEF that for every dollar you get \$9.31 of value.*





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***For More Information: [www.lionseyefoundation.com](http://www.lionseyefoundation.com)***

### ***Lions Eye Foundation Updates***

While we wait for the State of California to inspect our new clinic, the big question on everyone's mind is, **“When is the Lions Eye Clinic moving?”** We have a tentative date set for February 16, 2017 pending the state's approval process. Our bags are packed and we are so ready to go. Think positively.

From funds raised by our capital campaign, the Eye Foundation has purchased three new lasers for use in our clinic. In addition, LEF has purchased new state-of-the-art equipment to completely outfit five exam rooms. More equipment will be purchased once we move into our new space. Next up in 2018 is the ambulatory surgery center (ASC) that will be built right outside the door of our new clinic at 711 Van Ness. These are exciting times!

The clinic and our doctors are always looking to increase the number of patients referred to our clinic. Finding patients in need of our services can be as easy as checking in with your local optometrist, visiting a local medical clinic that provides free care, or talking to school nurses in your community. Lions Eye Foundation referral guidelines and forms are available on our website [www.lionseyefoundation.com](http://www.lionseyefoundation.com).

We are in the business of helping people, but it costs money. Our total LEF budget for FY 2016-2017 is \$667,300. Program Services (patient related costs) accounts for 80% of our budgeted expenditures. Resource Development (which includes this newsletter) is only 16%. But, most importantly, Administrative expenses are a paltry 4%.... an amazingly wise and productive use of your hard-earned donations to the Foundation. As this point halfway through our fiscal year, we are running a deficit of \$100,000. So if you are able, please consider making a donation to LEF.



Combined glaucoma (SLT) & after cataract (YAG) laser made by Quantel Medical purchased by LEF Capital Campaign.